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**The voice for the environment since 1955**

Cr John Thain  
Civic Centre,  
601 High St.,  
Penrith NSW 2750

1 September 2006

Dear Mayor Thain,

**Re: Cranebrook rezoning application**

As the State's peak environmental organization since 1955, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) works closely with member groups, local communities, government and business to ensure a positive future for our environment. NCC serves as the umbrella organization for more than 130 environmental member groups to coordinate and develop an environmental awareness through community based education projects, research into environmental management with conferences, publications and key events as well as running conservation campaigns. NCC is also influential in identifying key conservation decisions and coordinating with those involved in management at a local, state and national level.

It has been brought to our attention that Penrith City Council is currently considering a rezoning application for the 181ha former Air Services Australia site at Vincent Rd and The Northern Rd Cranebrook in order to allow residential development of the site. This is of grave concern to our members, considering the large variety of native flora and fauna known to be present on the land. It has been reported to us that the Conacher Travers flora and fauna study, despite not assessing the entire site, identified at least 179 species of native plants, and 87 species of fauna, including Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Sugar Gliders, and many species of bats and possums. There were 7 threatened flora species, 2 Endangered Ecological Communities and 2 threatened fauna species listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1997* found to be present on the land. The site is also of crucial value in providing a wildlife corridor between the South of the ADI Site through to Agnes Banks and beyond. A 1997 flora and fauna corridors study performed by your Council identifies the whole site as essential for this purpose.

In the media release dated 18<sup>th</sup> August 2006 (on Council's website) you are quoted as saying that "This was public land. The government didn't own it; they were only custodians of it... In an effort to make a quick dollar on the former Air Services Australia site, the Federal Government has taken flight of its responsibilities and left the community to carry some very heavy excess baggage." We agree entirely. As such, we will be campaigning to have the NSW Government acquire, restore and manage the land in order to preserve its conservation values into the future. However, this will not be possible if the application for rezoning is granted and the residential development is allowed to go ahead.

In line with Penrith Council's stated commitment to preserving environmental values, we would suggest that the land would be put to better use as a wildlife corridor and passive recreation area for the people of Penrith, allowing for the preservation of the threatened species to which the site provides vital habitat. We are aware that the development application proposes 'environmental housing' and a nature reserve, however, this reserve would be managed by the company, and as such, funding and the level of management would be subject to the whim of the company. The company would likely have vested interests in allowing the reserve to deteriorate in order to facilitate eventual further development. We also submit that any further fracturing of the remnant corridor would greatly impact upon the native flora and fauna, further endangering the threatened species present.

We are aware that the site is currently unmanaged and as such is subject to rubbish dumping, vandalism, trail bike riding, arson etc. However, these issues can be resolved with adequate funding and a Plan of Management, and the site's unique and vital conservation contributions can be maintained into the future, providing crucial protection for the native flora and fauna, and a passive recreation area for both current Penrith residents as well as future generations.

If you require any further information regarding this issue, please do not hesitate to contact the NCC Coastal Campaigner, Beck Rush at the above address.

Sincerely

Cate Faehrmann  
Director